CHAPTER 14
LIKE LAS MENINAS (PART 2)

ART BY ICHIHA AKIZUKI
WRITTEN BY MAI MOCHIZUKI
CHARACTER DESIGNS BY
SHIZU YAMAUCHI

WHAT A BIG SHRINE GATE!

IT'S FOR THE HEIAN SHRINE.

IT WAS BUILT IN 1928...

...TO COMMEMORATE EMPEROR SHOWA'S ENTHRONEMENT, WHICH WAS HELD IN KYOTO.

THE OKAZAKI DISTRICT HOLDS NOT JUST THE HEIAN SHRINE,

BUT MANY OTHER CULTURAL FACILITIES SUCH AS THE KYOTO MUNICIPAL MUSEUM OF ART AND THE KYOTO PREFECTURAL LIBRARY.

YOU COULD SPEND AN ENTIRE DAY JUST TOURING THIS AREA.

IN FACT, WE SHOULD DO THAT SOMETIME.

AOI-SAN?

Y-YEAH, MAYBE WE SHOULD...

WOULDN'T THAT BASICALLY BE A DATE?!

The Takamiya Estate

HA HA HA

AND HERE I THOUGHT I'D GOTTEN USED TO SEEING HUGE HOUSES...

THIS PLACE IS AMAZING.

CHILDREN?

YONEYAMA-SAN.

HEY THERE.

MY NERVES JUST GOT THE BETTER OF ME AND I CAME EARLY.

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME.

DID WE KEEP YOU WAITING LONG?

"MAKE ME A PAINTING LIKE A VELÁZQUEZ."

He was commissioned...

...by a man he once sold a forgery to.

I GUESS HE WOULD BE NERVOUS...

I wonder what Yoneyama-san managed to come up with...

TAKAMIYA WILL JOIN YOU SHORTLY. PLEASE WAIT HERE.

THAT PAINTING...

RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE

THAT'S... THAT'S THE PIECE I SOLD TO TAKAMIYA-SAN...

THEY HAVE TO STOP AND WONDER WHAT I'M DOING WITH VERMEER'S *THE GUITAR PLAYER.*

MOST PEOPLE WHO COME HERE ARE SHOCKED TO SEE IT.

HELLO, KIYOTAKA-KUN.

APOLOGIES FOR MAKING YOU COME ALL THIS WAY.

IT'S BEEN SOME TIME, TAKAMIYA-SAN.

You seem well.

TAKAMIYA-SAN.

THIS IS MASHIRO AOI-SAN.

SHE'S A PART-TIMER AT KURA.

A... A PLEASURE.

O-OF COURSE!

HE SEEMS KIND.

IT MUST BE INTERESTING TO WORK WITH THE YAGASHIRA FAMILY.

ENJOY IT ALL YOU CAN.

WELL THEN, YONEYAMA-SAN...

GULP

WHY DON'T WE GET RIGHT TO THE BIG REVEAL?

SWISH

THA-THUMP

THA-THUMP

It's reminiscent of Velázquez's portrait of Princess Margarita...

But whose face is that?

OH, SATOKO...

IT FEELS LIKE THE KING AND QUEEN'S LOVE FOR THEIR DAUGHTER IS RIGHT THERE ON THE CANVAS.

BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WAS JUST THE RESULT OF HIS TECHNICAL PROWESS.

HE MANAGED TO CAPTURE HER CHILDISH CHARMS EVEN IN A ROYAL PORTRAIT.

PRINCESS MARGARITA AS PAINTED BY VELÁZQUEZ...

SO I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF ASSUMING...

...THAT YOUR REQUEST WAS FUELED BY MEMORIES OF HER.

AND I THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS YOUR LATE GRAND-DAUGHTER, SATOKO, MIGHT BE EQUALLY PRECIOUS TO YOU...

THAT'S RIGHT. SATOKO-SAN DIED WHEN SHE WAS JUST FIVE...

BUT THE GIRL IN THIS PAINTING IS MUCH OLDER.

AND SO YOU PAINTED AN OLDER SATOKO.

THAT FATED ACCIDENT HAPPENED DURING A FAMILY OUTING.

I ALONE HAD STAYED HOME TO WORK.

BACK THEN, I WAS SO FOCUSED ON MAKING MONEY. FAMILY ALWAYS CAME SECOND.

I SEE...

YONEYAMA-SAN WANTED TO GIVE TAKAMIYA-SAN A GLIMPSE OF WHAT SATOKO-SAN MIGHT BE LIKE IF SHE WERE STILL ALIVE.

TAKAMIYA-SAN...

IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU LOSE THEM THAT YOU DISCOVER HOW PRECIOUS THEY TRULY ARE.

THAT NO MATTER HOW WEALTHY YOU MAY BECOME, THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS YOU CAN NEVER GET BACK...

PERHAPS THE ACCIDENT WAS MEANT TO TEACH ME A LESSON.

Y-YES?

YONEYAMA-SAN.

I THOUGHT IF THE ONE I'D ACQUIRED WAS GENUINE, THEN SURELY THE ONE IN THE MUSEUM WOULD BE OF INFERIOR QUALITY.

I IMMEDIATELY FLEW OUT TO LONDON TO SEE THE ONE BELIEVED TO BE REAL.

I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS A FORGERY.

WHEN I FIRST SAW YOUR *GUITAR PLAYER*...

THEY WERE EXACTLY THE SAME.

BUT THE MUSEUM'S PAINTING AND THE ONE YOU BROUGHT ME...

A MAN OF YOUR TALENTS ...

I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HOW YOU WOULD RESPOND TO MY TEASING REQUEST.

BUT THE FACT REMAINED THAT A COPY HAD FOOLED ME.

THAT WAS HOW I KNEW...

...THAT MY *GUITAR PLAYER* HAD TO BE A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL.

TAP

YOU CREATED A WONDERFUL PIECE.

IN THE END...

OR WOULD YOU ONLY MIMIC THE SKILL INVOLVED?

WOULD YOU CREATE THE PAINTING I WAS HOPING FOR?

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET TO SEE SATOKO ALL GROWN UP.

THANK YOU, YONEYAMA-SAN.

I'M GLAD I DIDN'T DISAPPOINT YOU.

THAT'S NOT REALLY THE PAINTING YOU WERE HOPING FOR, IS IT?

BUT TAKAMIYA-SAN...

HOLMES-SAN?

IT'S TRUE, ISN'T IT?

I'M CONFIDENT IN WHAT I PAINTED, OF COURSE.

BUT WHEN YAGASHIRA-SENSEI SAW IT, HE SAID I SHOULD CONSULT KIYOTAKA-KUN...

DID HE REALIZE SOMETHING WAS WRONG?

I'VE BEEN WONDERING ALL THIS TIME.

YOU'RE NOT THE TYPE TO RESORT TO FLATTERY, TAKAMIYA-SAN,

SO I'M SURE THAT YOU DO INDEED LIKE THIS PAINTING VERY MUCH.

BUT YOUR REQUEST, "LIKE A VELÁZQUEZ"...

...SEEMS TO IMPLY YOU HAD A SPECIFIC PAINTING IN MIND.

AND THIS PAINTING...

...ISN'T IT.

THE OWNER MUST HAVE KNOWN SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT...

THAT'S WHY HE ASKED HOLMES-SAN TO COME ALONG.

AND IT'S TRUE THAT IT WASN'T THIS PAINTING.

IT'S TRUE THAT I HAD A SPECIFIC PAINTING IN MIND.

SO IT'S FINE.

I AM EXTREMELY SATISFIED.

BUT IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT THIS ONE WILDLY EXCEEDS MY EXPECTATIONS.

YOU COULD EVEN SAY ITS VISION SURPASSED MY VERY IMAGINATION.

WAIT A MINUTE!

IF THIS PAINTING ISN'T WHAT YOU WANTED, THEN I HAVEN'T REALLY FULFILLED YOUR REQUEST!

I... I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT!

PLEASE!

WILL YOU GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE?

...PERHAPS HE'S STARTED TO ACQUIRE HIS OWN PRIDE AS AN ARTIST.

YONEYAMA-SAN?

IN THE GARDEN?

TAKA-MIYA-SAN.

THAT IS YOUR GRANDSON'S FAMILY, CORRECT?

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

OH... WERE THOSE THE VOICES I HEARD EARLIER?

HA HA HA

I THOUGHT SO.

THE ONE TREASURE LEFT TO ME...

I LOST MOST OF MY FAMILY IN THAT ACCIDENT.

MY GRANDSON WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR...

IT'S IRRE-PLACEABLE.

AND HE'S NOW OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE A FAMILY OF HIS OWN.

...WAS A PAINTING LIKE *LAS MENINAS*, WASN'T IT?

WHAT YOU WANTED...

LAS MENINAS...

LAS MENINAS?

I BROUGHT THIS JUST IN CASE.

HERE.

AS IMPRESSIVE AS EVER, KIYO-TAKA-KUN.

THIS IS *LAS MENINAS*.

WELL... I SEE PRINCESS MARGARITA IN THE CENTER OF IT ALL.

ARE THE OTHER WOMEN HER LADIES IN WAITING?

HUH?

AOI-SAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS IS A PAINTING OF?

THE ONE HOLDING A PAINT-BRUSH.

YOU'RE NOT WRONG.

BUT TAKE A LOOK AT THIS MAN HERE.

IS THAT... A PAINTING?

AND THE TWO SMALL FIGURES YOU SEE IN THE BACKGROUND ARE THE KING AND QUEEN.

TH-THE ARTIST?

THAT'S VELÁZQUEZ HIMSELF.

NO, AOI-CHAN.

IT'S A REFLECTION IN A MIRROR.

BUT THIS IS REVER-SED...

TRADITIONALLY, THE KING STANDS ON THE LEFT,

IN OTHER WORDS, THE ROYAL COUPLE IS STANDING JUST BEHIND OUR VIEWPOINT,

AND VELÁZQUEZ IN THE PAINTING...

...IS PAINTING THE ROYAL COUPLE STANDING BEFORE HIM.

...WAS PAINTED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE KING AND QUEEN?

IT WAS VELÁZQUEZ'S DEPICTION OF THE HAPPY SIGHTS THE KING BEHELD EVERY DAY.

YES.

What he really wanted...

...was a painting like *Las Meninas*.

"MAKE ME A PAINTING LIKE A VELÁZ-QUEZ."

...but might not always be there.

Of this... The happy family he sees every day...

TAKA-MIYA-SAN.

WOULD YOU ALLOW ME TO PAINT FOR YOU AGAIN?

THIS IS WHAT TAKAMIYA-SAN WANTED TO PRESERVE IN PAINTING FORM.

THIS TIME...

THIS TIME, I'LL PAINT YOUR HEART'S TRUE DESIRE!

VERY WELL.

NOW THEN, LET ME ASK YOU PROPERLY.

WOULD YOU PAINT FOR ME...

...THE HAPPY SCENE YOU SEE HERE RIGHT NOW?

O-OF COURSE...

I'D LIKE A PAINTING OF YOUR OWN.

BUT THIS TIME, RATHER THAN IMITATING A VELÁZQUEZ...

I WOULD BE HONORED.

KIYO-TAKA-KUN.

THANK YOU FOR COMING TODAY.

NOT AT ALL. I'M GRATEFUL TO HAVE SEEN SUCH A LOVELY PAINTING.

THAT PORTRAIT OF SATOKO REALLY IS SPLENDID.

I SHALL DISPLAY IT PROUDLY.

OH? WHERE'S YONEYAMA-SAN?

IT SEEMS HE'S STARTED SKETCHING MY GRANDSON'S FAMILY ALREADY.

LET'S LEAVE HIM BE FOR A WHILE.

BY THE WAY, SEIJI-SAN MENTIONED SOMETHING TO ME...

HE SAID THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SKILLED FORGERIES CIRCULATING THESE DAYS.

REALLY?

MY GRANDFATHER AND I RECENTLY EXPOSED ONE— A COUNTERFEIT SHIGARAKI URN— ON DISPLAY IN A MUSEUM.

IT'S TRUE.

IN A MUSEUM?!

YES.

ARE THEY REALLY THAT SKILLFULLY MADE?

THEY'RE SO WELL DONE, IT'S AS IF THEY'RE CARBON COPIES OF THE ORIGINALS.

JUST LIKE YONEYAMA-SAN'S FORGERIES...

HOW AWFUL...

I'VE WARNED OTHER APPRAISERS TO STAY VIGILANT, BUT...

WE'RE THINKING ABOUT TAKING A TOUR OF OTHER MUSEUMS...

...TO SEE IF ANY MORE TURN UP.

I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.

HMM...

HOLMES OF KYOTO, EH?

CHAPTER 14
END